

welcome China as it strives to become a truly great power. Our interests with China are too vital—the consequences of failing to build a constructive relationship with China too profound—to do otherwise.

Mr. President, how much time do I have left in my request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 8 minutes 4 seconds.

#### THE BOSNIAN ELECTIONS

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I would like now to speak very briefly, 8 minutes, to the issue of Bosnia. Last weekend, the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina went to the polls to elect their various municipal governments. I know the President has recently been to Bosnia, as I have. These local elections had been postponed from last year because of tampering with registration, chiefly by the Bosnian Serbs.

But I am happy to report, and we have all observed, that this year's municipal elections were a success. Despite dire threats of violence against refugees and displaced persons who wanted to cross over to their former homes to vote, over 2 days, not one single incident of violence occurred in the entire country.

Why? For a simple reason, I believe, Mr. President. Because of the presence of SFOR, the NATO-sponsored troops on the ground led by recently reinforced American troops. SFOR made clear to all parties that violence would not be tolerated and force would be met with force.

Every single time over the past several years when the West has been forceful in its behavior, the ultranationalists in Bosnia, primarily the Serbs but all ultranationalists, have backed down—every single time.

The elections were carried out by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the so-called OSCE, in which the United States is an active member, but only one of many. The OSCE observers deserve a great deal of credit for their successful labors.

The results of the election will not be known for another couple of days. Already, however, some encouraging signs are emerging. In Tuzla, a place I have visited on more than one occasion, the Muslim Party for Democratic Action, the SDA, conceded defeat by Mayor Selim Beslagic, who represented not just the Muslim party but the multiethnic joint group that was running.

I met the mayor last month. I met with him last month in Bosnia in Sarajevo. When I met with him, he indicated that he represents not just Muslims, but he represents this multiethnic slate and he represents just the kind, in my view, of democratic, tolerant, pragmatic politician that is going to be needed to rebuild Bosnia. But the point is, the controlling party in the area lost. The election was free.

Until now, three ethnically based parties that profess to represent the in-

terests of the Muslims, Serbs, and Croats have been dominating the airwaves and the patronage system. Tuzla, and perhaps other cities in both the federation and the Republika Srpska, show that if SFOR and the international community guarantee equal access, the monopoly of these parties on power can be broken.

Moreover, Mr. President, I would argue it represents what I believe to be the majority view of Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims, who, I might add, lived together in peace for decades and decades prior to this and the majority of whom wish to do that again. But it shows that the monopoly of the parties that are representing purely the xenophobic notions of their particular interests are not necessarily the views of the people of Bosnia.

Moreover, it is likely that, thanks to the absentee voting and the protection offered by SFOR for returning refugees, the election may reverse the vile ethnic cleansing of the war. For example, in the town of Drvar in western Herzegovina, it was 97 percent Serb until the town's inhabitants were driven out in the fall of 1995 by Croats. Last weekend, the Croats who displaced the Serbs did their best to harass returning Serb voters. International election officials from the OSCE, however, insisted the Serbs be allowed to vote, and it looks like there may be a turnaround in that community as well.

Several other towns, like Jajce and Srebrenica, site of the largest civilian massacre in Europe since World War II, may see their former inhabitants, in these two cases Muslims, forming the governments in those two cities.

The international community is now faced with the next—and this is an incremental thing, Mr. President—they are faced with the next stark question of whether now we will enforce the election results, whether we will now be part of that.

I realize that is a dicey deal, but I continue to argue that when we demonstrated force, and given the power of the people in those communities, we, the Western community, have prevailed.

So now the question is, will we enforce the results of the election by guaranteeing that the newly elected councils not remain governments in exile? Enforcing the election results, of course, means that the right of refugees and displaced persons to return must be honored, which Dayton calls for. In most cases, that would be able to be accomplished only by the international community being present and the presence of SFOR.

Mr. President, I believe we have no choice in this matter. Both for moral and practical reasons, it seems to me we must move rapidly to enforce the resettlement of refugees as the results of the election will dictate. This will be a difficult task, and the time is short before the onset of the Balkan winter.

Most likely we will have to begin with highly visible demonstration returns in one or two selected towns. But, Mr. President, we must keep the democratic momentum going.

Rebuilding shattered Bosnia is an immense undertaking, and now, for the first time in years, there has been a string of successes. The United States has been the prime mover in these, although not the prime player in terms of numbers. We must continue to exert our leadership on the European Community, and we must continue the valuable and honorable work we have undertaken, for, Mr. President, to do otherwise, I will predict, the result will be disastrous for Europe, disastrous for our interests.

I will end with a rhetorical question. How can we expect stability in Europe if the ethnic cleansing is able to be justified, and partitioning takes place? How do we then explain that to the other parts of the former Soviet Union who have equally deep divisions that exist? Mr. President, there are 5 million ethnic Russians in the Ukraine. There are 5 million of them. There are millions of people who have ethnic differences living throughout that area. How do we deal with Rumania and Hungary? If we say that this vile ethnic cleansing will be rewarded by us backing out and letting it return to the status quo, you know European leadership will not step up to the ball. Again, I want to make it clear, we play the smallest part relative to the rest of the world in this, in the sense that we are only a small portion of the overall effort, but the overall effort is occurring because of our leadership.

So, Mr. President, I acknowledge that this is a dicey deal. I acknowledge that it is going to be difficult, but I would suggest that those who have a different view from me acknowledge that there have been recent successes that at least lend hope to the possibility that we can continue down this path.

I thank the Chair, and I thank my colleague. I yield the floor.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate now resumes consideration of H.R. 2107, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2107) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Ashcroft amendment No. 1188 (to committee amendment beginning on page 96, line 12, through page 97, line 8) to eliminate funding for programs and activities carried out by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Hutchinson amendment No. 1196, to authorize the President to implement the recently announced American Heritage Rivers